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Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-ninth session on the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme

Note by the Secretary-General**

In conformity with General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the attached report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-ninth session on the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

* E/AC.51/2002/1.
** Delayed in order to coordinate with other OIOS reports concerned with the disarmament programme.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-ninth session on the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on an in-depth evaluation.

Overall, the implementation by the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the recommendations in the OIOS in-depth evaluation of 1999 endorsed by CPC was satisfactory. As recommended, the Department developed further its collaboration with relevant treaty and regional organizations, an important element in advancing implementation of international and other disarmament norms. It pursued with more determination its collaboration with United Nations organizations and with the research community. The Department benefited from the expertise of the latter to explore issues of common interest and provide substantive support to governmental expert groups. In recent years, it promoted more actively the participation of academics and non-governmental organizations in international meetings that the Department organized.

Considering its limited resources, the Department for Disarmament Affairs could not respond to all Governments' requests for support to practical disarmament measures and other initiatives. The support of the Department to the process of intergovernmental negotiation and deliberation in the field of disarmament is a major aspect of the work of the Department. The 1999 in-depth evaluation had concluded that this support was effective. No recommendation had been made, at the time, on this aspect of the work of the Department and, therefore, it is not covered in this triennial review of implementation of CPC recommendations.

The recommendations which have not been implemented, or for which insufficient progress was made, would have required that different budgetary decisions be made during the budgetary process, vis-à-vis the recommendation to improve the financial and organizational arrangements of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the recommendation on strengthening the regional centres for peace and disarmament. As the budgetary process is distinct from the planning process to which evaluations contribute, the matter cannot be pursued further in the context of this triennial review. Regarding the recommendation to improve access by the Department to the databases of the relevant Secretariat departments, OIOS believes that more thorough consultations should be held among the relevant departments to implement that recommendation.

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-ninth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme (E/AC.51/1999/2). The Committee endorsed five of the recommendations of the report and formulated one additional recommendation. The extent to which the Department for Disarmament Affairs implemented these six recommendations, as endorsed and adopted by the Committee, is the subject of the present triennial review.

2. The triennial review is based on (a) the information provided by the Department for Disarmament Affairs on the progress made in implementing the recommendations, in response to OIOS annual follow-up, (b) a review of the relevant documentation and information submitted by the Department and other concerned organizations, in early 2002, and (c) consultations with their staff. In 1999, the in-depth evaluation of the disarmament programme had concluded that the members of intergovernmental organs were very satisfied with the secretariat services provided in support to intergovernmental negotiations and deliberations in the field of disarmament. During the period 2000-2001, the Department provided support to a number of major conferences. However, meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament and meetings of States parties to multilateral disarmament treaties were cancelled or postponed by legislative decision, as reported in the report on the programme performance for the biennium 2000-2001. For several years, the Conference on Disarmament was not able to reach consensus on its programme of work. In this difficult context, the Department further developed its outreach activities and collaboration with other organizations to promote "a better understanding of United Nations endeavours in the field of disarmament" as stipulated in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/53/6/Rev.1,[1] para. 26.7).

II. Findings

3. The findings below are in relation to recommendation 3 (a) on the ratification of multilateral agreements; recommendation 4 on collaboration in research; recommendation 5 on the financial and organizational arrangements of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); recommendation 6 on access to Secretariat databases; recommendation 7 (a) on collaboration with regional organizations. The other recommendations in the in-depth evaluation were not endorsed by CPC. The Committee formulated one additional recommendation on the regional centres for peace and disarmament, the implementation of which is reviewed in paragraphs 23-25 below.

A. Multilateral agreements

Recommendation 3, Multilateral agreements: (a) In keeping with existing legal provisions regarding the role of the Secretariat, and in collaboration with relevant treaty organizations and regional organizations, the Department for Disarmament Affairs should promote the ratification of disarmament treaties by facilitating the exchange of information between interested States and

undertake, at the request of Governments, advisory services and technical assistance.

4. The advocacy role of the Secretary-General, to ensure early entry into force of a treaty and universality of adherence, a concern frequently expressed by Member States, is carried out under specific provisions of a convention, at the request of United Nations bodies or under a broad interpretation of the Secretary-General's moral obligation regarding matters that may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. The 1999 OIOS evaluation noted that briefings and seminars that the Department for Disarmament Affairs organizes may promote treaty ratification but that funds are available mostly to support negotiations and are lacking for the promotion of ratification.

5. To implement CPC recommendation 3 (a) above, the Department decided, in 1999, to pursue the following course of action:

(a) To co-organize or sponsor with interested organizations and Governments — including with treaty-implementing organizations — workshops, seminars or discussions to engage interested States in a dialogue aimed at seeking measures to accelerate ratification of disarmament treaties;

(b) To facilitate exchange of information among States on expertise, in particular regarding the establishment of treaty-implementing institutions at the national level;

(c) To involve the regional centres for peace and disarmament in order to facilitate dialogue among States at the regional level;

(d) To provide required technical expertise in treaty implementation, at the request of Governments.

6. In this regard, during the period under review, the Department for Disarmament Affairs maintained close contacts with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (PTS/CTBTO) to facilitate implementation of their respective relationship agreements with the United Nations. Also, regular exchange of information continued with the International Atomic Energy Agency and regional treaty organizations such as the South Pacific Forum and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. The functions of these organizations and the resources made available to some of them do not compare with the role and resources of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. For example, the PTS/CTBTO has more than 250 staff, technically experienced on issues relevant to one treaty, while the Department has 50 staff to cover the full range of disarmament issues. Nevertheless, the PTS/CTBTO reported that it appreciated the cooperation of the Department and its support in organizing outreach activities. According to the PTS/CTBTO, a notable example of this cooperation is its joint action with the Department in the successful holding of the 2001 conference on facilitating the entry into force of the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, in New York, at the ministerial level, with the participation of 118 States. Also, the regional centres for peace and disarmament in Lomé and Lima assisted the PTS/CTBTO in the organization of regional and subregional workshops, and the implementation of a one-year programme to

promote the CTBT ratification in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, using voluntary contributions. In 2000 and 2001, the regional centre in Lima made presentations to the legislative bodies of four countries in the region in support of ratification of the CTBT, in collaboration with representatives of the PTS/CTBTO. Since then, three of these countries have ratified the treaty. In addition, the regional centre in Asia and the Pacific, in close collaboration with the PTS/CTBTO and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), promoted the signing and ratification of the CTBT and the CWC by the Pacific Island States through its workshop held in Wellington, New Zealand, in February 2002.

8. Such joint initiatives mobilize additional support for the work of the Department for Disarmament Affairs but are only a partial solution to the Department resource constraints which cause it to limit its activities. For example, in the area of practical disarmament projects, requests for assistance were received during the biennium 2000-2001 from a dozen Governments and one group of countries. Due to the limited resources available, the Department was able to respond to half of these requests in the form of fact-finding missions and field visits to set up arms collection projects.

9. To increase transparency and confidence-building conducive to strengthening disarmament treaty regimes, the Department maintains two databases for the voluntary exchange of information relating, respectively, to (a) the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and (b) the United Nations standardized instrument for reporting of military expenditures, as mandated by the General Assembly. To encourage greater government participation in these two instruments, the Department initiated a series of activities to familiarize Member States with the reporting procedures. Activities included formal meetings of delegates on the margins of the First Committee, symposia as well as regional and subregional meetings of government officials organized with the assistance of interested Governments. Only 28 Member States participated in the reporting of military expenditures in 1996; in 2001, reports were received from 55 Governments. In 1996, 93 Governments participated in the Register of Conventional Arms; in 2001, replies were received from 117 Governments. A third database was developed and maintained in implementation of article 7 of the 1997 Convention on anti-personnel mines.

10. OIOS considers that recommendation 3 (a) has been implemented by the Department for Disarmament Affairs to the extent that its resources made it possible.

B. Increased collaboration in research

Recommendation 4, Increased collaboration in research: In the context of existing mandates, as adopted in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session and subsequent General Assembly resolutions, the Department for Disarmament Affairs should explore modalities for increased collaboration with UNIDIR, organizations of the United Nations system, the research community and non-governmental organizations. This collaboration should be aimed at providing a greater volume of studies and technical information in response to existing and future requests of Member States.

11. The 1999 in-depth evaluation noted that the Department prepares, for the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, a small number of studies and expert reports. The evaluation recalled that, at its first special session devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly considered that the Centre for Disarmament — now the Department for Disarmament Affairs — should take into account fully the possibilities offered by specialized agencies and other institutions of the United Nations system with regard to studies and information on disarmament, and should also increase contacts with NGOs and research institutions (resolution S-10/2, para.123).

12. As requested in recommendation 4, the Department further developed its collaboration with organizations of the United Nations system and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) explored the possibility of organizing joint workshops and other events leading to disarmament. The joint exhibit with UNICEF, "Taking aim at small arms: Defending children's rights", has been installed at different locations since 1999. Organizations such as UNESCO, the United Nations University (UNU) and UNICEF participated, at the invitation of the Department, in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education. The Department's cooperation with United Nations organizations and departments continued within the framework of Coordinating Action on Small Arms (see para. 20 below). The Department, through its regional centre for Asia and the Pacific, established in 2001 a consultative group comprising focal points from the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding the non-nuclear aspects of Mongolia's international security.

13. Several experts in the field of disarmament informed OIOS that the Department has compensated for its limited resources and difficulties to undertake longer-term research by collaborating more closely with UNIDIR. In turn, UNIDIR has taken on a much more practical and relevant role, relating its research priorities in a more timely manner to the issues that confront the international community. UNIDIR research capacity was utilized by the Department in the studies mandated by the General Assembly on disarmament and non-proliferation education and on missiles. With regard to the latter, the Institute acted in a consultative capacity, providing substantive support to the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All Its Aspects. UNIDIR continued to organize seminars in Geneva and New York on issues ranging from the impasse at the Conference on Disarmament to tactical nuclear weapons. These were well attended by high-level participation from government delegations and experts.

14. A symposium by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on a new conceptual approach to disarmament was co-sponsored by the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Department commissioned the services of the PIR Centre for Policy Studies — a research institute in Russia specializing in non-proliferation issues — as a consultant for the Group of Governmental Experts on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education. In general, the careful effort of the Department to promote the link between the diplomatic environment in which it operates and civil society is a relatively new phenomenon, which is rapidly gaining

impor.ance. It is noted that, in recent years, the Department has actively promoted the participation of academics and NGOs in international meetings which the Department is organizing. Department staff and the head of the Department himself attended meetings of parliamentary groups, other important public meetings at the national level and joint meetings of governments and NGOs.

15. OIOS considers that the Department for Disarmament Affairs implemented recommendation 4 in a meaningful manner and facilitated the exchange of ideas between governmental and non-governmental sectors, as envisaged in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

C. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, financial and organizational arrangements

> *Recommendation 5, UNIDIR*: The Department for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR should develop proposals for alleviating difficulties regarding the current financial and organizational arrangements adopted in implementation of the statute of UNIDIR, while maintaining its autonomous status. These proposals should be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration at its fifty-fifth session.

16. Immediately after CPC adopted recommendation 5, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR, in consultation with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, were actively engaged in finding a solution to the budgetary cuts that had affected the Institute in 1996. In 2000, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 55/35 A, in which the Assembly, considering the continuing need for the international community to have access to independent and in-depth research on security issues and prospects for disarmament, recommended that the Secretary-General seek ways to increase the funding of UNIDIR, within existing resources. The Assembly recalled the report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on the issue, in which hope was expressed that the United Nations subvention to UNIDIR would be restored to its pre-1996 level and adjusted for inflation. In an effort to increase this subvention, the Department, in consultation with UNIDIR, proposed an increase to $250,000. The proposal was not successful. Thus, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 submitted for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee recommended that a subvention of $213,000 per year — unchanged since 1996 — be approved to cover the costs of the Director and the administration of UNIDIR. By resolution 56/255 of 24 December 2001, on special subjects relating to the programme budget, the General Assembly approved the recommended subvention of $213,000. The subvention has been recosted to take into account inflation, among other things. *It is the understanding of UNIDIR that this is a direct result of the efforts made to implement recommendation 5 above.*

17. OIOS considers that recommendation 5 was implemented and met with partial success, taking into account General Assembly resolution 55/35 A.

D. Access to Secretariat departments' databases

Recommendation 6, Contingency access by the Department for Disarmament Affairs to external databases: Arrangements should be worked out between the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the relevant Secretariat departments and international organizations to facilitate access by the Department to disarmament-related information contained in their databases, so that the Department can access such databases when specific requests require it to compile information in them.

18. The 1999 in-depth evaluation had reported several deficiencies in the sharing of information relevant to the work of the Department among departments of the Secretariat and that a joint databank or other arrangements for closer collaboration would be useful, especially to obtain first-hand information from field missions. The Department of Political Affairs had stated to OIOS that the Department for Disarmament Affairs databases, if developed with advice from the Department of Political Affairs, could be very useful to the work of both departments. After CPC adopted recommendation 6 above, the Department for Disarmament Affairs entered into preliminary consultations with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations regarding access to their databases. It was noted that the software infrastructure for access is in place but that the need to protect politically sensitive information may be an obstacle to broadening access. The departments involved considered that protection procedures require a high-level of database management and that the needed human resources may not always be available. The CPC recommendation above involves access only to disarmament-related information for the analysis of which the Department for Disarmament Affairs has clear mandates and, considering its status within the Secretariat, should not be prevented from reviewing sensitive information in its area of competence. The difficulty perceived by the departments might be addressed by modifying the structure of the databases so that only the information relevant to the Department for Disarmament Affairs would be accessible by it. It would be useful for the departments, in this instance, to review the experience of programmes processing routinely information with complex confidentiality requirements, such as the secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board.

19. *The Department for Disarmament Affairs stated to OIOS that, with the development of the Internet and Intranet at the United Nations, departments can now access the information regarding various areas of their work that are posted on their respective web sites.* OIOS considers that recommendation 6 was partially implemented.

E. Collaboration with regional organizations

Recommendation 7: Collaboration with regional organizations: (a) To establish effective liaison and cooperation with regional organizations, as recommended by the Disarmament Commission, the Department for Disarmament Affairs should conclude agreements or memoranda of understanding with regional organizations, inter alia, to facilitate the exchange of experience between regions or to assist in the implementation of confidence-building measures adopted by Member States at the regional or subregional levels.

20. The medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 required that the Department for Disarmament Affairs provide support and promote regional disarmament efforts and initiatives so that regional solutions are more vigorously pursued. To that end, the Department continued to cooperate with other entities within and outside the United Nations system. Within the United Nations, the Department for Disarmament Affairs is the focal point for all action on small arms, an issue addressed by a number of regional and subregional initiatives. Since 1998, the Department has supported the mechanism for coordinating action on small arms, which remains the only forum for mutual consultation and exchange of information on this issue among United Nations programmes.

21. As recommended, the Department concluded agreements with a number of regional and subregional organizations. In connection with the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed by the Department and the Organization of American States in 2001 with a view to collaborating on projects on illicit trafficking of firearms, ammunition and explosives. In addition, an MOU between the two above-mentioned entities is being negotiated on landmine matters. The Department is also exploring the possibility of concluding MOUs for cooperation with MERCOSUR, CARICOM, the Andean Group, OPANAL and the University for Peace. For the Department Lima regional centre, these associations increase the visibility of the Centre and have a synergistic effect. The other regional centres did not follow this formal approach to collaboration. However, it is noted that these centres cooperated on a regular basis with regional and subregional organizations in their regions. These included the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference and the Economic Community of Central African States in Africa and the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Pacific Islands Forum in Asia and the Pacific.

22. OIOS considers that steady progress has been made in the implementation of recommendation 7.

F. Strengthening the regional centres for peace and disarmament

Additional CPC recommendation: The Committee highlighted the importance of the regional centres for peace and disarmament. The Committee requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate action to strengthen the centres and make them more effective.

23. In the mid-1990s, it was observed that the voluntary contributions on which the centres depended primarily for their operations had dwindled over the years and their activities were drastically curtailed. The Kathmandu Centre had continued operating from New York and, as it incurred lesser amounts of administrative support costs, it was less seriously affected than the Lomé and Lima Centres. The Secretary-General had stated in his report on the situation that, "part of the difficulty in raising funds through voluntary contributions [for the centres was] that, in many cases, potential donors have wished to see an infrastructure already in place at the respective centres before committing themselves to contributing to any project" (A/C.5/47/62, para. 7). Normally there is no provision in the regular budget to cover

the administrative support costs of such centres. A one-time provision of $150,000 was approved for that purpose by the General Assembly for the biennium 1992-1993. Only the posts of directors of the centres are financed from the regular budget. In view of the precarious situation of the centres, the Secretary-General proposed in the programme budget proposals for 1998-1999 that these posts be discontinued. The General Assembly decided to retain these posts and encouraged the future directors of the centres to actively pursue all available venues for securing resources for the revitalization of their activities. The vacant posts in those centres were filled in 1998 and the revitalization programme for each Centre was launched and became progressively implemented.

24. The amount of extrabudgetary resources in the trusts funds of the three centres increased from $342, 000, for the biennium 1998-1999, to an estimated $764,400 for the biennium 2000-2001. The Department, to alleviate the difficulties due to the small size of its staffing establishment, sought to strengthen its human resources by engaging associate experts. Currently, of the five associate experts assigned to the Department, three were deployed to the regional centres. Two additional experts might be assigned to the centres in the near future. At the Lima Centre, the host Government makes an annual contribution towards the maintenance and operation of the Centre. However, in his report, the Secretary-General stated that "adequate funding for administrative and operational costs has yet to be found" for the Lima Centre (A/56/154, para. 34). As for the Lomé Centre, "persistent financial problems do not allow the Centre to operate at full scale to implement its work programme. Its functioning is also hampered by a lack of resources to cover operational costs. It therefore continues to operate with a skeleton local staff at the General Service level" (A/56/137, para. 42). Regarding the Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific, currently relocated to Kathmandu, the host Government informed the Department that it will "bear the annual operational costs of the Centre, once the Centre has been physically moved to Kathmandu" (A/56/266, para. 15). The Department is currently negotiating a host country agreement and a memorandum of understanding with Nepal.

25. OIOS believes that the full implementation of the CPC recommendation on strengthening the centres requires that a new approach be found to the funding of administrative support costs of all the centres. The ad hoc contributions for this purpose are highly unpredictable, and without stable funding to provide for support staff, necessary equipment and logistics, the normal functioning of the centres is not possible. This matter was reviewed in detail in the recent OIOS report on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Department for Disarmament Affairs (A/56/817).

III. Conclusions

26. **To the extent that its resources made it possible, the Department for Disarmament Affairs adopted and pursued a plan of implementation of the CPC recommendations that achieved, in large part, the intended results. In particular, the Department, in collaboration with relevant treaty and regional organizations, the research community and non-governmental organizations contributed to promote more vigorously a better understanding of United Nations endeavours in the field of disarmament.**

27. **The Department is expected to facilitate the process of multilateral deliberation and negotiation by providing substantive organizational support to a number of intergovernmental organs. During the period 2000-2001, a number of important conferences were held. Other meetings of States parties to multilateral disarmament agreements as originally scheduled were cancelled by legislative decision. The Conference on Disarmament did not reach consensus on its programme of work.**

28. **The implementation of the recommendation on improving the financial and organizational arrangements of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research met with partial success. The recommendation on strengthening the regional centres for peace and disarmament requires further efforts. Full implementation of these recommendations requires that different budgetary decisions be made. As the budgetary process is distinct from the planning process to which evaluations contribute, consideration of the factors that would ensure full implementation cannot be pursued further in the context of this triennial review. Regarding the recommendation to improve access to the databases of the relevant Secretariat departments, OIOS believes that more thorough consultations should be held among the relevant departments to implement the recommendation.**

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 6.*